

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 01578 080842Z

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3591

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1578

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT LE

SUBJ: MEETING WITH PIERRE GEMAYEL

1. SUMMARY: DURING TWO HOUR LUNCHEON CONVERSATION APRIL 6 PHALANGIST LEADER PIERRE GEMAYEL COMMENTED BRIEFLY ON HIS RECENT TRIP TO JORDAN AND REPEATED HIS STANDARD POSITION ON LEBANESE POLITICAL QUESTIONS. HE SEEMED REMARKABLE UNINTERESTED IN RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON.

2. AMBASSADOR AND DCM AND THEIR WIVES JOURNEYED TO BIKFAYA APRIL 6 TO LUNCH WITH SHAYKH PIERRE GEMAYEL AND HIS SON AMINE, ALSO ACCOMPANIED BY THEIR WIVES. SHAYKH PIERRE HAD JUST RETURNED FROM ONE DAY CONDOLENCE VISIT TO AMMAN WHERE HE HAD ALSO HELD GENERAL POLITICAL DISCUSSION WITH KING HUSSEIN. SHAYKH PIERRE SAID HE WAS MUCH IMPRESSED WITH GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF AMMAN SINCE HE HAD LAST SEEN IT TWO YEARS AGO AND THAT HE AND HUSSEIN HAD AGREED ON DANGERS OF LIVING WITH PALESTINIANS. SHAYKH PIERRE ALSO MADE THE FOLLOWING REMARKS ON THE LEBANESE POLITICAL SITUATION:

3. CHRISTIAN-MOSLEM COOPERATION IN LEBANON. SHAYKH PIERRE SAID CHRISTIANS AND MOSLEMS HAD MADE CONSIDERABLE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 01578 080842Z

PROGRESS IN LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER BETWEEN 1943 AND 1970. HE, FOR EXAMPLE, HAD LEARNED TO CALL HIMSELF AN ARAB WITHOUT EMBARRASSMENT AND SOME MOSLEM POLITICIANS HAD SAID THEY WERE PROUD TO CALL THEMSELVES LEBANESE. NEVERTHELESS, WHEREVER THERE WAS A CRISIS, THE MOSLEMS FORGOT LEBANON AND THOUGHT ONLY OF "ARABISM." THE "PALESTINIAN-COMMUNIST" CONSPIRACY SINCE 1970 HAD MADE THIS SITUATION MUCH WORSE.

HE ADMITTED THAT THE EVENTS OF THE LAST TWO YEARS APPEARED TO HAVE CONVINCED SOME LEBANESE MOSLEMS OF THE ERROR OF THEIR WAYS AND THAT THERE MAY THEREFORE BE SOME HOPE OF COOPERATION WITH THEM IN BUILDING A NEW LEBANON. (AMINE GEMAYEL SAID NOTHING BUT DID NOT LOOK CONVINCED.)

4. THE PALESTINIANS. IN RESPONSE TO THE AMBASSADOR'S QUESTION ABOUT HIS MEETING WITH YASSIR ARAFAT AT THE KUWAITI AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE, SHAYKH PIERRE IMPLIED HE HAD NOT EXPECTED ARAFAT TO BE THERE BUT HAD WELCOMED THE OPPORTUNITY TO TELL ARAFAT TO HIS FACE WHAT HE THOUGHT OF HIM. AMINE GEMAYEL SAID ARAFAT IS A LIAR AND PIERRE AGREED THAT HE HAD FREQUENTLY GONE BACK ON HIS WORD OF HONOR. PIERRE REFERRED TO THE AIN RUMMANEH INCIDENT OF APRIL 1975 AND SAID HE HAD PROPOSED THAT AN ARAB LEAGUE COMMITTEE HEADED BY ARAFAT INVESTIGATE THE INCIDENT BUT ARAFAT HAD IGNORED HIS OFFER, PREFERRING TO USE THE INCIDENT FOR HIS OWN PROPAGANDA PURPOSES.

5. THE SOUTH. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE SOUTH, PIERRE SAID "THAT IS YOUR (THE US) PROBLEM" AND SEEMED UNINTERESTED IN DISCUSSING IT FURTHER.

6. COMMENT: SHAYKH PIERRE, WHO IS 72, HAD RETURNED FROM JORDAN ONLY THREE HOURS BEFORE THIS LUNCH AND SEEMED TIRED. HIS REMARKS ON POLITICAL QUESTIONS WERE HIS STANDARD RESPONSES BUT THEY LACKED HIS USUAL FIRE. PARKER

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